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THE HISTORY

OF A

Postage Stamp

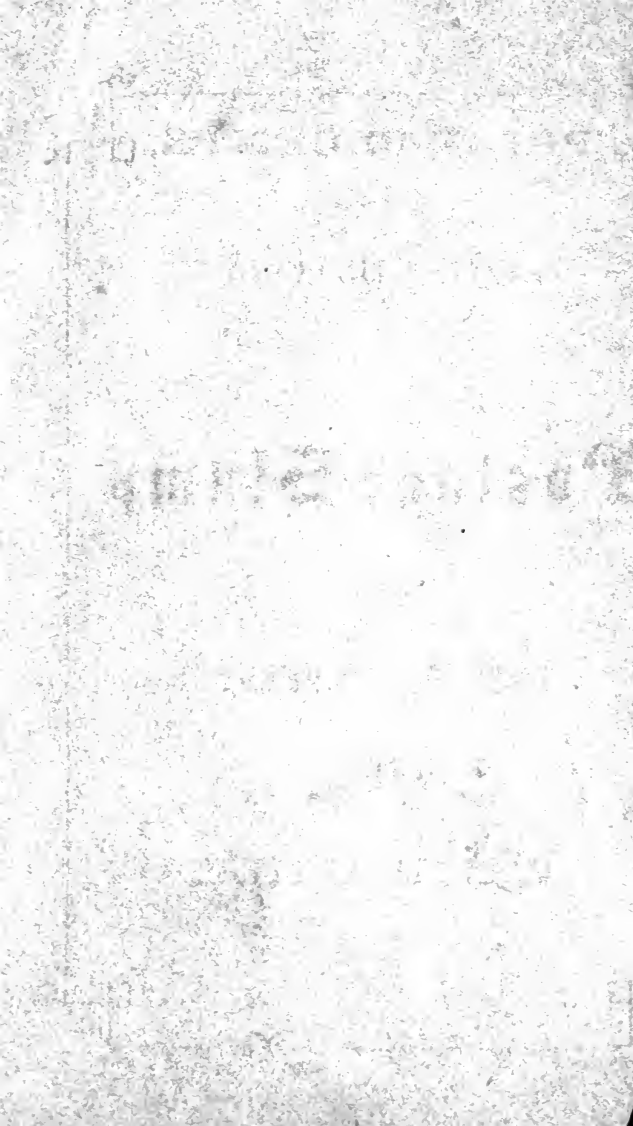
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Bodeneau
DEATH BED CONFESSION

OF A

MAIN STREET CLERK.

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PREFACE.

The pages contained in this little pamphlet are published at the request of the wife of the young man whose death bed confession lies before you. One of the most prominent physicians to whom the confession was made in full, has kindly volunteered to have the facts published and offered for sale. Aside from the charitable object in view, it is a curious series of facts, and not until the end of the confession does the singular entrance of the Postage Stamp take place.

The low price of this little book will enable every one to purchase a curious and wonderful piece of reading.

RALPH BODENEUX, M. D.

1869

Entered according to Act of Congress in the
year 1869, by RALPH BODENEAUX, M. D., in
the Clerks office of the District Court of the
United States for the Eastern District of
Missouri.

THE CONFESSION.

In the summer of 18— I was called to attend upon a young man who was stricken down in the prime of life by that terrible scourge, the Small Pox. The wife of the young man had delayed to long ere summoning a physician, and the disease had taken such deep root upon his system, that I saw at a glance there was very little chance for his recovery—however I kept the young man alive long enough to receive from his lips the following confession. *verbatim et literatim*.

Two days before he died he said to his wife, Dora, I wish you would leave me alone with the Doctor for an hour or two as I have something to communicate to him which I prefer you should not hear from my lips—though when I am dead you will know all. His wife left the room weeping. When the door was closed, he motioned me to take a chair and be seated near his bedside. I complied with his request, eager to hear what my patient had to

impart unto me. When I had become seated he reached out his arm and took my hand in his—Doctor, said he, tell me honestly and truly how long I have got to live—tell me the truth, for I know that I have got to die ere many hours have passed away. O——E. said I laying my hand on his pulse, you certainly cannot survive more than thirty six hours at the farthest, there I have told you the truth, and may you find rest for your soul ere that time has passed. 'Tis well said he. Doctor listen to me while I relate to you part of my history—that part which has haunted and troubled me for many, many months. Promise me that you will not disclose one word of what I say until the clay is over my coffin. I promise you I replied. Then listen to the confession of a dying man.

In 18——, I came to this city from the East, I had heard much of the Western Country, and determined to seek my fortune in this city: I brought with me letters of recommendation from several prominent men in the East. In less than a month after my arrival these secured me a situation in one of the largest business houses in the city. In a short time I gained, as I supposed, the full confidence of my employers, who treated me with marked respect and courtesy. A year passed away, at the end of which time my position & salary were raised,

with fair prospects of a future partnership in the firm. During my term of service in the house I became acquainted with the lady who is now my wife; having saved some little money from my salary, in addition to a small sum brought with me from the East, I thought the matter over in my mind and thinking of the prospects before me, I considered myself safe in getting married. The ceremony was performed in a quiet way, and with my wife, took rooms in one of the modest boarding houses, with which this city is crowded. I doubt if ever there was a happier couple in existence than Dora and myself, but even the clouds that have a silver lining are black enough in the center. my wife almost daily visited me at the store, as she felt lonely being left alone during the working hours. It was not long ere she was acquainted with the proprietors, and if she chanced to call upon me while I was very busy, she would retire to the office and converse with either of the firm until my busy moments were over, when she would return to my side and enjoy a chat with me. One day she paid me a visit, I happened to be extremely busy at the time, seeing which, and not wishing to interrupt me she as usual proceeded to the office. Our Junior member was not in town at the time and no one occupied the office but our Senior. I had nearly finished my business

with one of our best customers from the country, in fact he was just on the point of leaving the store, when my wife came rushing out of the office, her face pale and her eyes filled with angry tears. I gazed at her with astonishment as she came up to me. She cried, I have been grossly insulted. I was so thunderstruck at this remark that for a moment or two my tongue could not find speech. When it did I exclaimed, how—where! In there, she replied, pointing toward the office. I rushed forward furious with rage, on reaching the door I found it locked, with one blow from my foot I burst it open and rushed in, there stood the Senior member with a large ebony ruler in his hand apparently on the defensive; not thinking or caring for the consequences I sprang upon him and seized him by the throat, he being a much more powerful man than myself, released himself from my grasp, and on the next instant, struck me a fearful blow on the head with the ruler. I sank senseless to the floor, a film of darkness came over me. When I came to I found myself lying in bed at my boarding house and my wife bending over me. I was delirious for some days afterwards, but finally recovered from the effects of the fearful blow. Then my wife told me the whole story of how she had been insulted by the Senior member. My blood fairly boiled with rage to

think that the man whom I had trusted as a friend should have become my bitterest enemy. Little did I think or know what a wolf in sheeps clothing had been befriending me apporently:

When I was able to leave my bed I immediately armed myself with a revolver and proceeded to the store, determined to shoot the villian on sight. On reaching the house I was refused admittance by order of the firm. I secreted myself however near the store, and awaited the coming of the man I sought, but my disappointment was great at not seeing him. he had either left the city or else escaped by some other way than from the front. About eight o'clock in the evening I returned home, sad at heart. Early the next morning, in fact a long time before the store was opened, I was at my post; again was I doomed to dissapointment, not a sign did I see of the man I was seeking—day after day did I traverse the city—day after day did I await his appearance at his place of business—day after day did I seek him at his residence—but of no avail. When a month had passed, I came to the conclusion that he had left the city. on making enquires I found he had left town, but I could gain no information as to his whereabouts. Depressed in mind and spirit at my not being successful, I shut myself up in the house and there brooded over my

wrongs. My wife endeavoured to comfort and console me; she had recovered from the excitement and agitation that she had received at the hands of my great and generous benefactor; and in fact, she was much more self-possessed than myself. Another month passed away, when I bethought myself that it was time to be seeking employment, as my funds were becoming rather low. I had also become more reconciled to my misfortune and tried to put a cheertul face on the matter. I applied to several parties in the city, but was politely informed that they did not wish employ a defaulter. That was the crowning stroke—a defaulter! I could obtain no explanation, merely beyond that they had heard of me from good authority, and they could give me nothing. When I informed my wife of this she was nearly broken hearted. As I could not obtain employment in the city, I concluded the best plan was to seek a situation elsewhere. Quietly my wife and I packed our trunks, and took passage on the Steamer Ruth for Memphis. On reaching that place we put up at one of the hotels. On the day following our arrival I set out to look for something to do: I was not particular as to what it was, as as I was becoming reckless. Fortune seemed to favor me, for on the third day I procured a berth as salesman in a Wholesale grocery. My mind then felt somewhat easier, as I could see

my way somewhat clearer. After obtaining the situation, we moved to a respectable boarding house where our expenses would be considerably less. Things went on very smoothly for a month or two, and I was flattering myself highly that I had got into the good graces of my new employer. One day while I was packing some goods that were to be sent inland, I heard my name called by the proprietor; on going to the office door he told me to come in as he wished to speak to me on a matter of great importance. I entered the office and seated myself in a chair and waited to hear his remarks. Taking a letter from his desk he spread it open and handing it to me bade me to peruse its contents. The letter read as near as I can remember, in this wise :

St. Louis, May 18 —

Mr. H.,

Dear Sir :

I understand that you have in your employ a young man by the name of O — e C — h. I do not wish to make you feel that I have interfered in any way, shape or form with your business, but I deem it my duty to put you on your guard in reference to the young man whom you have in your store. I will state the facts in a few plain words, and then you can act as you think proper. In March, 18 —, the person of whom I speak

made his appearance at my office and tendered me several letters of recommendation, on the strength of which I gave him a situation. I thought him to be an honest, straight-forward young man, but alas, I was dissatisfied. He had not been in my employ more than a year and a half when I found that I had cause to suspect him of dishonesty; I watched him closely for several weeks and was finally convinced that my suspicions were correct. I called him to me and stated to him what I knew, he, with tears in his eyes, confessed the fact and made a full statement of his crime. I did not wish to prefer charges against him, as I knew it would go hard with him in the court room, so I merely discharged him from my employ and let the matter drop. If you yourself wish to keep him in your service, well and good, but I can assure you, you will be the loser in the end. I have the honor to remain

Respectfully,

Your obdt. servant,

B. B.

Doctor, when I had finished the letter, I thought to myself that is the neatest piece of villany I ever saw. That is the revenge said I. Well sir, can you explain the contents of that letter, asked my new employer? Do you believe its contents sir, I replied? What else am I to do but believe it? You see it is written by

one of the most prominent men in St. Louis, and you say nothing or give no explanation in order to prove to the contrary. Because I have no explanation to make beyond that the whole thing is false and gotten up for revenge. Oh that will not do sir, replied he. such a man as that would have no motive for revenge on a clerk that was formerly in his employ. It was in vain, Doctor, that I expostulated with him, it was of no avail. I was ordered to receive my wages due from the book-keeper, and take my departure, which I did. On returning home I broke the news to Dora, who clenched her little hands with rage at the miserable mean conduct of the cowardly villian who had sought to wrong me. I soon found out that the news in the letter had been spread among the business houses of Memphis, and once more I found it impossible to procure employment. My next step was to go to Vicksburg, there I obtained an inferior position in a Government office, but I was not destined to remain there long. One day I was suddenly discharged, the only explanation being that I was reported as being dishonest. I knew well enough that I had been tracked to Vicksburg, and another letter must have been written similar to the first. My mind was in a perfect torture. How long was this to go on? I tried again and again in Vicksburg to get work, but all to no purpose. Finding

my money running short I pursued my way to New Orleans, there I thought myself safe, but I was doomed, at least it seemed so, I had just enstalled myself in a first class house, when I was again summoned to the office and informed that my services were no longer required ; this drove me to a perfect frenzy. In turn I took a solemn oath that I would retaliate on my enemy, and let him see to his cost that two could play at the game he was then holding in his own hands. My wife tried to comfort me, but all to no purpose. I swore that I would be revenged, and I set to work and racked my brain in order to think and devise some plan in which I could rid myself of my enemy. At last I devised a plan by which I knew there would be little chance of discovery. Having settled the thing in my mind, I applied to a druggist and obtained from him a deadly poison the least particle of which entered the stomach was sure death. After obtaining the poison, my next step was to procure some six or eight postage stamps; my motive in doing so was this. I knew that the man who hated me, placed any small change or stamps that he received by mail, in a little private drawer in his desk, and I also knew that no one else but himself used the postage stamps. After procuring the stamps I carried them to my room where I carefull removed the mucilage on the

back, washing it carefully so that not a vestige remained; then with some fresh gum arabic which I had dissolved and mixed with the deadly poison I had obtained, I took a brush and spread the mixture over the stamps, and laid them in the sun to dry, after which they looked just the same as when I obtained them at the Post Office. I then sat down and wrote a letter to my late St. Louis employer, to the effect that I was a party who some years ago had kept back a small amount of money on a sale that he had made to me, and not having the exact amount I remitted the balance in stamps.

At the same time I wrote a letter to the leading paper in St. Louis; stating that I wished to subscribe for three months, as I knew if the thing was settled, it would surely take place in few weeks, and I should have the satisfaction of seeing the death of my enemy in the paper. The paper came duly to hand day after day for several weeks. I was only interested in the column of deaths. My mind was on nothing else. At last, one morning in looking over the paper, I had the grim satisfaction of reading a notice of the death of the man who had prosecuted me. I drew a long breath of relief, though at the same time feeling a horrible remorse, but I had determined on revenge, and I got it. I sent to my friends in New York City and obtained a fresh supply of money, after

which I hastened to St. Louis. Changing my name I again procured employment and remained unmolested. And now Doctor I have finished. May God forgive me for what I have done. I had been driven almost to madness by the wretch who had sought to wrong me, and I do not think my sin is any greater than his.

You may call in my wife now if you please, and remember your promise, not a word of this until I am buried, then if you choose you can tell it to the world,

During the young man's statement I remained at his bedside wrapt in wonderment, thinking to myself what a curious relation of facts, and that truth is still greater than fiction.

I called in his wife as requested and then left the house. On the following day I was at his bedside when he died, his poor, young and beautiful wife was nearly heart broken.

After the last ceremonies had been performed, I related to the widow what had been told me. She knew the whole facts with the exception of the poisoning.

The lady is still living in this section of the country in needful circumstances, and for this reason she has consented to have the confession published, the profits derived from which will go to her.

There are several parties living in this city at the present time who are well acquainted with all the parties mentioned in this little pamphlet.





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